

Landscape of Construction - Rapa Nui

Introduction

The Landscapes of Construction Project aims to improve our understanding of the methods and dates of quarrying work at Puna Pau. This collaborative project between archaeologists from British Universities and Rapa Nui is providing the first ever archaeological results from the Puna Pau Pukao quarry. Below we provide further information on our previous work at Puna Pau, our current research inside the crater quarry and our on going collaborations with Rapa Nui. We hope that this project will provide new ways in which the extraordinary cultural achievements of early Rapa Nui can be understood and admired around the world.

Previous Work

Excavation 2009

In 2009, we excavated a small trench to identify and investigate the Pukao road down the North side of the crater. This study revealed the construction of the Pukao road and provided some interesting results regarding a ramp and pit beneath the Pukao shown in Fig. 1 & Fig 2. This appears to suggest that the Pukao by the side of the road were deliberately placed. Three samples of obsidian were taken from different levels of the excavation and sent for obsidian hydration dating. These dates provide evidence that the Pukao may have been placed by the side of the road c. 1350 AD. The other two dates of C.1450 AD and C.1650 AD provides potential evidence of longer-term activity at Puna Pau.

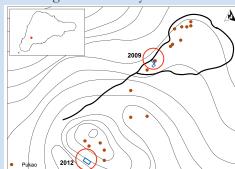


Figure 1: Map of Puna Pau showing location of 2009 and 2012 excavations.

Survey 2009

In 2009 a multifaceted survey was undertaken of the whole of the Pukao road and northern slopes of Puna Pau. This survey identified the location of the Pukao road coming out of the crater and winding down the north side towards the eastern valleys. This survey also recorded detailed images of the visible Pukao that facilitated interpretation of their wider landscape context and provides important data to help monitor their long-term conservation.

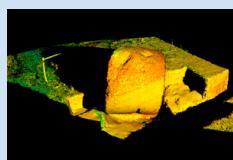


Figure 2: Detailed image recording of excavation trench showing details of Pukao above and below ground

Landscape Interpretation

The wider landscape interpretation of this work revealed some interesting ideas about the different periods of activity at Puna Pau. It appears clear from the study of the petroglyphs on the Pukao that these were added later than their original deposition. This is because the petroglyphs all stop at the modern ground level. The work in 2009 showed that a wide range of activities at Puna Pau have gone on for hundreds of years and that the crater thus required further investigation.



Figure 3: a. Obsidian Axe; b. Excavation in progress in 2009 with visiting students being shown around.

Current Work

Current Excavation

We are currently excavating a small trench 2x4m next to the interior southern face of the Puna Pau crater. We hope to identify evidence of how the Pukao were quarried from the Scoria bedrock and potentially provide more detailed dates for this activity.



Fig. 4 Photography of excavation area beneath exposed red scoria rock face.

Current Survey

We are currently surveying the interior of the crater with non-destructive surface equipment. These surveys will reveal if there are more Pukao beneath the surface of the crater. We also hope that this survey will show where the different quarry bays may be within the crater



Figure 5: Electromagnetic survey within Puna Pau.

Detailed Recording and Interpretation

It is vital in any archaeological project that every tiny piece of data is recorded. Therefore we record detailed drawings, photographs, measurements and descriptions of everything that we find so that all of the things we find will always be available for Rapa Nui to study and interpret in the future.

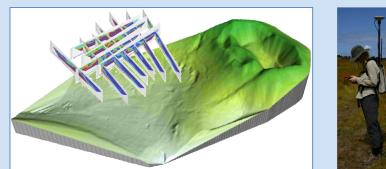


Figure 6: a. Digital terrain model and locations of geophysical survey. b. Global Positioning System survey in progress.

Collaboration

Rapa Nui Archaeologists

This project is being conducted in collaboration with Rapa Nui archaeologists working together with project staff from British universities. The current excavation is being supervised by the eminent archaeologist Don Sorobabel Fati and involves Rapa Nui students currently studying archaeology at the University of Santiago.



Figure 7: a. Rapa Nui schoolchildren visiting the Puna Pau excavation and participating in 2009. b. Tiki Pau undertaking geophysical survey.

Rapa Nui Youth and the Museo de P. Sebastian Englert

The youth embody the future aspirations of any society and in this regard we always try to involve and inspire the youth of Rapa Nui with our research. In collaboration with the Museo de P. Sebastian Englert, and director Francisco Torres, we organize a series of open days for site visits, talks and hands on experience for Rapa Nui school children. Please contact Dr Jago Cooper, Mana Nui Inn, 56 32 2100811, jago.cooper@ucl.ac.uk, for further details of future events.



Figure 8: Rapa Nui students, Joaquin Soler Hotu, Isaías Hey Gonzalez, Francisca Villanueva, conducting geophysical survey.

CONAF and Rapa Nui Heritage

This project is carried out in close cooperation with CONAF with the aim of working towards the protection and long term conservation of these internationally recognized archaeological sites. It is vital that all masterplans for the management and monitoring of Rapa Nui heritage sites are founded upon the highest quality archaeological information. We aspire to continue our work with all interested parties in Rapa Nui to help achieve this and improve understanding of the exceptionally rich array of Rapa Nui cultural heritage.



Figure 9: a. Umu ceremony with all those involved in the excavation. B. Francisca Villanueva sieving the first soil excavated in 2012.

Key Findings

- This is a collaborative archaeological project between British Universities and Rapa Nui
- The aim of the project is to improve our understanding of the quarrying activities and chronology of Puna Pau
- We have identified the road leading out of the quarry and suggest that the Pukao have been intentionally positioned by the side of the road
- The dating of archaeological samples suggests quarrying activity has been ongoing at Puna Pau between c. AD1350-AD1650
- The current work inside the crater will reveal key information regarding the nature of quarrying activities at Puna Pau

Please contact Dr Jago Cooper at jago.cooper@ucl.ac.uk with any further questions regarding this work